

**Colorado River Citizens' Forum**  
**August 11, 2005**  
**Tentative Meeting Notes\***

Board Members in attendance:

Roger Gingrich  
Brian McNeece  
Paul McAleese  
Wade Noble  
Tracy Register  
Pablo Orozco  
Eric Reyes

Board Members absent:

Marie Barrett  
James Davey

Staff in attendance:

Al Goff  
Anna Muñoz  
Carlos Pena  
Bernardino Olague

MxIBWC staff in attendance:

Alfredo De La Cerda

Members of the public in attendance:

SPA Enrique Lozano, USBP  
SPA Lloyd Frers, USBP  
Juanita Salas, Congressman Filner's office  
Christa Franks, USBR  
Cindy Hoeft, USBR  
Sol Orozco  
Jerry McLees, EDAW Inc.  
Victor Carrillo, Calexico County Supervisor  
Aida Gates, Senator Ducheny's office  
Marlene Best, City Manager City of Calexico  
Jose Angel, CRWQCB Region #7  
Javier Alatorre, New River Committee  
Russell Kitahara, Coachella Valley Water District  
Eva (?), Woman's Improvement Club  
Elaine Perez, Woman's Improvement Club  
Kirk Dimmitt, Imperial Irrigation District  
Mike Salario, Imperial Valley Press  
Ray Falcon, New River Committee  
Adrian Perez, CA State Water Resources Control  
Tony Tirado, Citizen

### Welcome and Introductions

Co-chair Brian McNeece welcomed attendees. He asked the board members to introduce themselves. He then asked attendees to introduce themselves.

### All American Canal Lining

Kirk Dimmitt of IID gave an update of the 23 miles of concrete lining: Design stage moving along, currently at the 90% stage. Will review all comments on August 22<sup>nd</sup>. Internal review for the 90% design stage is scheduled for August 26<sup>th</sup>. Will be ready for bid on November 1, 2005. On January 25, 2006 will receive bids. February 13<sup>th</sup> will evaluate bids and notice of award will be sent out. On March 1, 2006 will issue notice to proceed with work. Legislation set a deadline of December 31, 2008 but should be completed sooner. Project cost 135.65 million dollars. Once construction is complete, USBR will transfer to IID for the operation and maintenance.

Public question: Where are funds from? State funded \$126 million and with Prop 50 gave them another \$9.65 million.

Public question: In what stage is Mexico's lawsuit at? Cannot comment. The ones named in the suit are the Department of Justice and the Department of Interior.

Public question: Will IID own the AAC when USBR does the transfer? No, it's just a transfer for operation and maintenance.

Public question: How much water is saved with this lining? 67,700 AF from the All American Canal.

Public question: Who gets this water that is saved? The QSA states San Diego Water Authority and San Luis Ray Indian Tribe for 110 years.

Public question: What if project goes over budget, will IID pay for cost? No, San Diego County Water Authority is responsible for anything above funded monies.

Public question: Will IID benefit or lose with the lining project? Neither, the water rights will remain the same.

### Calexico New River Committee

Pablo Orozco gave a brief history and PowerPoint Presentation of the New River proposed project:

*History:* In 1905-07 the Colorado River washed out diversionary works, and the Colorado River flowed into the Salton basin creating the New and Alamo River channels and the Salton Sea. The New River channel is approximately 60 miles in length and up to 2/3 of a mile wide within the U.S. In Mexico, about 13 miles.

*New River:* Flow is approximately 200 cfs at the U.S./MX border. Flow to the Salton Sea is approximately 800 cfs, which makes it one of the two main tributaries to the Salton Sea, the other being the Alamo River. Of the flow, 20% is treated sewage and raw sewage originating from the border city of Mexicali in Mexico. Polluted with biological contamination, volatile organic compounds and heavy metals. The river is quoted "as the most severely polluted river within the United States".

Briefed on the New River Laws and Regulations.

*Proposed project:* The project would include: (1) a trash screen and monitoring station for the New River at the border; (2) construction of an enclosed box culvert alongside the current river channel and allow to treat the river as it passes through the city; 3) construction of wetlands. This project is estimated to cost \$70 to \$80 million dollars.

Cal EPA Environmental Justice Pilot Project: February 2005 the State Water Resources Control Board approved its five Pilot projects. The Calexico New River Committee's Public Participation and Community Capacity Building project was one of the two chosen water projects. Public invited to attend the 1<sup>st</sup> Local Advisory Group meeting, August 30<sup>th</sup> at 5p.m. at the San Diego State University IV Campus' Gallery.

*SB387*: February 17<sup>th</sup>, Senator Ducheny introduced SB387 and was passed/signed by Governor Schwarzenegger July 25, 2005. The SB387 gives authorization to state law to fund project in California to protect human health and the environment in Calexico and surrounding areas and for binational remediation efforts in the future.

*New River Task Force*: Formed in June 2005. Comprised of representatives of the U.S. and Mexican section of the IBWC, Congressman Filner's office, EPA, CA State Water Resources Control Board, Border Environment Cooperation Commission, North American Development Bank and the Calexico New River Committee.

Public question: When Mexicali treats diverted water to Colorado delta, will there be less flow? Yes, may be less flow. They will be treating 20 million gallons. Plans to use for irrigation.

Public question: What is Mexicali doing to control discharge/source of problem? Mexico has had some improvements but its sources are limited. Mexico cannot really address seriously with the limited sources.

Brian McNeece: Does CRWQB support encasing the New River? Jose Angel, CRWQB, stated: not yes or no. \$70 million is a lot of money for a small area. Encasing the river solves a problem but not the problem. To treat/solve the problem could cost half a billion dollars.

#### El Centro Sector Border Patrol Operations

U.S. Border Patrol Agents Enrique Lozano and Lloyd Frers gave a Power Point Presentation of the El Centro operations.

*Profile*: El Centro sector is responsible for 76 miles of linear border. Explained the current situation in the El Centro and Calexico sectors.

Apprehensions in this area are down from a high of over 200,000 in 2001 to about 40,000 to date this year. Improvements are due to additional agents and new ways to deploy them, including ATV's, horses, and bike patrols in urban areas. Also the better fencing, road barriers, lighting, and remotely monitored cameras have contributed. As a consequence, immigrant traffic has move eastward into the Yuma-Tucson sectors.

*New River*: Crossings through the New River are also down because agents now insert a "drag gate" into the river. USBP has tried to educate about the dangers of swimming in the New River.

Deaths due to drowning in the AAC and heat exposure in the desert continue at usual levels, with 31 so far this year compared to last years total of 32. To combat this, Homeland Security has created posters and TV ads that run throughout Mexico. These strong messages show that crossing the border can mean death.

*BORSTAR*: USBP has a search trauma and rescue team called BORSTAR. This team serves as the primary coordinator and facilitator of search and rescue operations within the El Centro Sector. Agents have received advanced training in search and rescue techniques, trauma and medical emergencies. Agents are EMT certified.

BORSTAR conducts a Bi-national training academy for law enforcement officers, firefighters and members of various rescue teams from various states in Mexico. So far has conducted three Bi-National academies, most recent in Chiapas, Mexico.

The Bin-National Academy is now a national BP program, with El Centro Sector BORSTAR as the lead.

*Bi-National Liaison Program:* El Centro Sector has created a pilot program to cultivate bi-national cooperative agreements to address shared concerns along the border.

- TRAINING: Bi-National Academies conducted by BORSTAR
- GUIDE IDENTIFICATION PROSECUTION PROGRAM: ELC Prosecution Unit teams with the Mexican Attorney General's Office (PGR) to identify and prosecute alien foot guides in an effort to disable smuggling organizations.
- JOINT INTELLIGENCE DATABASE: Information originating from field investigations is collected, analyzed, categorized, and disseminated to dismantle organized smuggling on both sides of the border.
- JOINT INVESTIGATIONS: Parallel investigations afford prosecutorial entities on both sides of the border the latitude to pursue criminals who avoid prosecution through cross-border flight.
- ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS: Uninhibited cooperation efforts in field operations and intelligence sharing that lead to a safer, more secure border.

Public question: USBP bike patrol in El Centro and Brawley, since you are not their for law enforcement as city police officers, what type of questions would you ask a person? Even if we are not there to enforce, our presence alone assist with illegal activity. We would ask immigration questions.

Public question: What would make you want to be suspicious of person's immigration status? Physical appearance and even going over board on U.S. patriotism.

Public question: How do you deal with illegal activity on bike patrol? We would call the sheriffs or local PD of possible illegal activity and just talk to the person long enough until the police arrive.

Public question: What are the figures for the past three years of people actually in the New River? Don't have a actually figure. It depends on the temperature/weather of the river. In the winter, not too many stay in the water very long because of how cold it is. In the summer, we have had 60 to 80 people attempt to swim the river.

Public question: What do they use to float in the New River? They are not using floatation devices as much. They are using trash bags filled with clothes and personal items as a floating device.

Public question: Does Calexico and El Centro station each have their own sector? Yes, from golf course bridge to Jacumba is El Centro and from bridge to the dunes is Calexico.

Public question: Are canine dogs used for drugs or human? For both, at checkpoints they are used to locate drugs but they are trained to track/search for humans. USBP uses local ranchers and veterinarians for the canine dogs. The canine unit began with nine canines and currently has 22.

Public question: Does each agent have their own vehicle or two to a vehicle? Staffing is not sufficient to double up agents. Agents rely mostly on their radios and training.

Public question: In regards to social environment, are agents trained to protect border? Do you have joint operations with local police, sheriffs etc.? And with the groups (Minuteman) coming in to try to assist USBP, are you trained to handle that and those that oppose their presence? USBP has many resources to assist local law enforcement as needed. We assist them as they would assist us when needed. Agents do have riot control training but the public who want to peacefully protest have the freedom to protest as long as they are not violating any law. USBP has no collaboration with any of these groups.

### Public Comment

- Commend CNRC for their efforts.
- This is not a New River, it's a Sewer River. In 1982 the cost to clean New River was \$50 million, the more we wait, the more the cost. So many treaties signed and nothing is being done. Not worth the paper it is written on. This is not only a Calexico problem but an Imperial Valley problem.
- Need to get board of Supervisors involved. Need to get City, County, media (CNN) and Chamber to form a program to pressure the U.S. Government. Need to file a suit against the Government.
- Encasing the river would move the pollution problem north and would require additional cleanup efforts downstream.
- The reduction of flow to the New River because of Mexicali II treatment plant (perhaps 30% less water at the boundary) and because of waters removed for power plants needs to be calculated before any encasement project.
- The community of Imperial County needs to speak with one voice to raise chances of funding.
- Ms. Juanita Salas, representing Congressman Bob Filner, spoke about his steadfast support on cleanup of the river and suggested community members write to the Senate Committee on Public Works Committee in support of the House version of WRDA, Water Resources Development Act. (It passed House overwhelmingly in July)

Engineer Olague commended CNRC. Thanked Congressman Filner for his meeting and efforts. Stated that the U.S. is drafting a scope of work and meeting with Mexico tomorrow. IBWC Task Force on the New River is viable; three subcommittees will be formed (1) study (2) finance (3) public relations.

Al Goff pointed out that very significant progress has been made over the years in Mexicali's sewer treatment infrastructure and is on pace for Mexicali II to be operational in the fall of 2006.

Suggested Future Agenda Items

Roger Gingrich: IBWC/USBR stand on the channelization project. A presentation/update on the carrying capacity issue for the limitrophe and relevant surveys.

Paul McAleese: Status of Reservoir project next to the All American Canal

Tracy Register: Status of levee to Levee cross section survey IBWC has contracted with USBR beginning August 15<sup>th</sup>. (Al Goff touched on its purpose: survey is to calculate the current carrying capacity of the river. Will be a levee-to-levee survey from above Morelos Dam, to 12SC to RS20S. Not sure if survey data will be available by next meeting but will provide an update)

Not sure who requested this: New River Task Force update

Wade Noble: Report on Salvinia Molesta infestation near or below Morelos Dam.

Al recommends for the next meeting in Imperial Valley that Engineer Muñoz from Mexicali give update on status of Mexicali II and related sewer system improvements.

Next meeting scheduled for November 8, 2005 in Yuma County

\*Meeting notes are tentative and summarize in draft the contents and discussion of Citizen's Forum Meetings. While these notes are intended to provide a general overview of Citizen's Forum Meetings, they may not necessarily be accurate or complete, and may not be representative of USIBWC policy or positions.